

The recent re-establishment of U.S.-Soviet talks on arms control has brought increased hopes for the improvement of relations between our two nations. It is an improvement in which all of us--and indeed the entire world--places great hope.

Your visit provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the realization of these shared hopes. But if we are to build a relation of trust on which genuine security and cooperation between our two countries can be established, we must also discuss, and try to resolve, the issues that divide us.

Solidifying a relation of trust between our countries requires that each of us abide by all of the provisions of international agreements to which we are signatories. It is difficult for an informed public to have faith in negotiations with a country that flouts solemn agreements in one area, such as human rights, while professing the urgent need for new agreements in another area, such as arms control or increased trade.

We view human rights as an international as well as bilateral matter. It has to do with commitments freely undertaken by the Soviet Union in international instruments, most notably under the Helsinki Final Act and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to respect the human rights of its citizens.

All too often when representatives of my country speak of public concern for human rights issues in your country, we are told that this is an interference in your internal affairs and thus not a legitimate topic for discussion between our governments.

Let me make clear that we cannot accept that response. Human rights concerns are an integral part of our policy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. These concerns will not go away; they remain a permanent component of the U.S.-Soviet agenda.

Your willingness to fulfill international human rights agreements inevitably reflects on your willingness to abide by other accords. Your failure to fulfill agreements influences our approach to negotiations and agreements on all issues of importance.

Now we are seeing deterioration, not improvements, in your human rights policy. I hope our meeting today can be a turning point for reversing that trend.

Recent events trouble us. There have been waves of arrests aimed at destroying or isolating those groups in the Soviet Union who refuse to submit to the control of the State, dissent from the tenets of Soviet ideology, or insist that the State respect their basic religious and ethnic rights.

New violations of the spirit of the Helsinki accords are commonplace. Your government has eliminated the ability of average citizens to place direct-dial phone calls to the West, enacted more stringent customs search regulations, made it more difficult to send package mail to the USSR, interdicted international mail, and established new penalties for unauthorized contacts with foreigners.

We remain concerned about long-standing instances of injustice. There are still 43 Soviet Helsinki Monitors in prison--their only crime was to call the public's attention to certain shortcomings in your government's observance of the Helsinki Final Act's human rights provisions. At least three Monitors have already died in prison. And just last week Vyacheslav Bakhmin of the Psychiatric Working Group was re-arrested.

We are concerned as well with the treatment of all political prisoners. Many prisoners of conscience face horrible conditions in labor camps, prisons, and psychiatric hospitals; systematic denial of family visits and correspondence rights; meager, barely subsistent food; and brutal treatment, including severe beatings from wardens.

A Hebrew teacher from Ukraine, Iosif Berenshtein, sentenced in December to a four-year camp term, was partially blinded by prison guards during a recent beating. Two other leading imprisoned Jewish activists, Anatoly Shcharansky and Iosif Begun, have been hospitalized after prolonged periods of punishment, isolation, and protest hunger strikes. In addition, at least nine political prisoners died last year while in confinement.

Moreover, Soviet treatment of other groups has hardly been better. Ukrainian human rights activists, as usual, have suffered particularly badly, and although Ukrainians number less than twenty percent of the population of the Soviet Union, they account for over forty percent of its political prisoners.

The Soviet government has turned a deaf ear to international protests at its harsh treatment of Dr. Andrey Sakharov and his wife Elena Bonner. Soviet authorities continue to isolate the Sakharovs from the world.

The tens of millions of Soviet religious believers practice their faith at their own peril. As a matter of routine they face employment and education discrimination. And those who disobey laws restricting the practice of religion face prison terms--recently three Russian Orthodox priests, two Roman Catholic priests, an Orthodox Jew, a Lutheran Minister, and an Armenian Apostolic deacon have been placed in detention.

Some 200 reform Baptists have been imprisoned for their faith. Many Baptist pastors have been jailed repeatedly.

Soviet Adventists have also been subjected to official repression: the plight of Soviet Pentecostals is exemplified in two month-long hunger strikes by 55 Pentecostals in Chuguevka.

The Soviet State even decrees which religions can exist in your country. Thus the Ukrainian Catholic (Uniate) Church and Jehovah's witnesses are illegal.

Soviet Jews face an especially hostile climate. Not only are they restricted in their religious observance; denied access to materials from which they can learn about their history, religion, and culture; their Hebrew teachers subject to increasing repression; but most frighteningly, those who seek to emigrate are increasingly being presented as traitors and criminals.

As recently as February 17 a program appeared on the first channel of Soviet television entitled "Conspiracy Against the U.S.S.R." It drew a connection between the C.I.A., Nazism, and Zionism. This preposterous claim has become more and more commonplace in Soviet brochures, books, newspapers, and television. To the Soviet public it signals that aggressive, hostile behavior towards those Jews who seek to emigrate enjoys official sanction.

Although the official Soviet Anti-Zionist Committee proclaimed in June 1983 that Soviet Jewish emigration was essentially "completed," there are some 400,000 Soviet Jews who want to emigrate. We are prepared to submit a list of names of people that put a lie to the statement that there are few Jews who want to leave. We know of them because their relations in Israel and the United States appeal to us for help.

Members of this delegation know of them because of our personal visits with refuseniks who have told us of their long wait to be reunited with their families.

These people will never be allowed to leave if your present emigration levels continue. Last year, only 896 Jews, 913 Germans, and less than 1,000 Armenians were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. In some cases families have waited over 25 years to be reunited. There is no other area where forward steps can have a greater positive impact on the overall atmosphere than in the one of freer emigration.

We recognize, however, that there are some modest, but hopeful signs in your human rights performance. Although Soviet emigration continues to fall, the number of refuseniks of long standing who are getting out has risen. In January and February emigration totaled only 163, but 75 were from the Moscow area and many were long-time refuseniks. Another welcome development was the January family visit to Anatoliy Shcharanskiy at his place of confinement.

I tell you this morning that we want to improve relations between our two great nations.

We want to enjoy a mutual and vigorous free trade.

We want a meaningful and lasting arms control agreement.

We want our two nations to enjoy peace and prosperity together.

But I also tell you that for any of these wonderful things to happen, we need to see a dramatic and consistent improvement in your country's human rights policy.

We need to see more emigration and a stop to repressive actions against cultural and religious study groups. We need to see that the Helsinki Final Act is being fulfilled. In this, as in other areas, it will be deeds and not words which will register Soviet willingness to take our serious concerns into account as a matter of policy.

If we take small steps together now we will be able to take great strides together later. Let us do what it is necessary and just so that our nations can forge a bold path together.